



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

ROGER BERLINER
COUNCILMEMBER
DISTRICT 1

January 12, 2009

Commissioner Joyce Starks
Chair
Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission
14501 Sweitzer Lane
Laurel, Maryland 20707

Dear Commissioner Starks:

Let me commend the WSSC for its swift action with regards to the River Road water main break. I appreciate the effort taken to both redirect the water and to repair the roadway in such a timely manner.

In my mind, many pressing questions remain about how we move forward from this point. My District has been particularly impacted, not only by this most recent break, but also by the threat of possible further looming problems. Many of my constituents are deeply concerned and I would hope to be able to reassure them that all that can be done is being done.

I understand that the WSSC will be briefing the Council on January 27th regarding the December water main break on River Road and it's implications for WSSC policies and practices going forward. There are some specific concerns I have and hope you will be able to provide answers to my questions on a timely basis.

1. The Prestressed Concrete Cylinder Pipes (PCCP) seems to be raising the most concerns.
 - a. How many miles of PCCP do we have in Montgomery County and where are they located?
 - b. When you briefed the Council in November you indicated that the Class II PCCP met design practices when it was installed but that the Class IV pipes were known to have problems. What Class of PCCP do we have and where are they located?
2. The Council has approved WSSC's October request to use excess funds to pursue the inspection of the prestressed concrete cylinder pipe. Could you provide your plans for these inspections?

3. Information provided at the November briefing indicated that the June break in the water main was caused by the pipe not being properly pre-stressed, the ground not properly protecting the pipe and the concrete diaphragm not being properly installed.
 - a. What do these findings tell us about vulnerable areas going forward?
 - b. Should the priorities be influenced by the size of the pipe, age or diaphragm construction?
4. At that November briefing, it was represented to the Council that all 54" pipes or greater had been inspected one to three times. Would you please provide me with information on these inspections: Where the inspections took place, when they were inspected and the schedule going forward for these inspections?
5. In November, when the WSSC briefed the Council on the June water main break, I was assured that the Tilden Lane 72" pipe, which is made of the same PCCP construction as the failed pipe on River Road, had been inspected, was being monitored and, as a baseline, was acceptable. Would you please provide me with any up dated assessments that have been made on this section of the water system and any results you have had from the fiber optic/sound monitoring?
6. What plans does WSSC have for expanding the fiber optic monitoring beyond the Tilden Lane neighborhood?
7. I have expressed my support for Federal Economic Stimulus monies for WSSC infrastructure needs. Given these serious water main breaks and the urgent need to up grade but also protect our water system, what would be the priorities for WSSC if stimulus monies become available?

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Roger Berliner', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Roger Berliner
Montgomery County Council
District 1